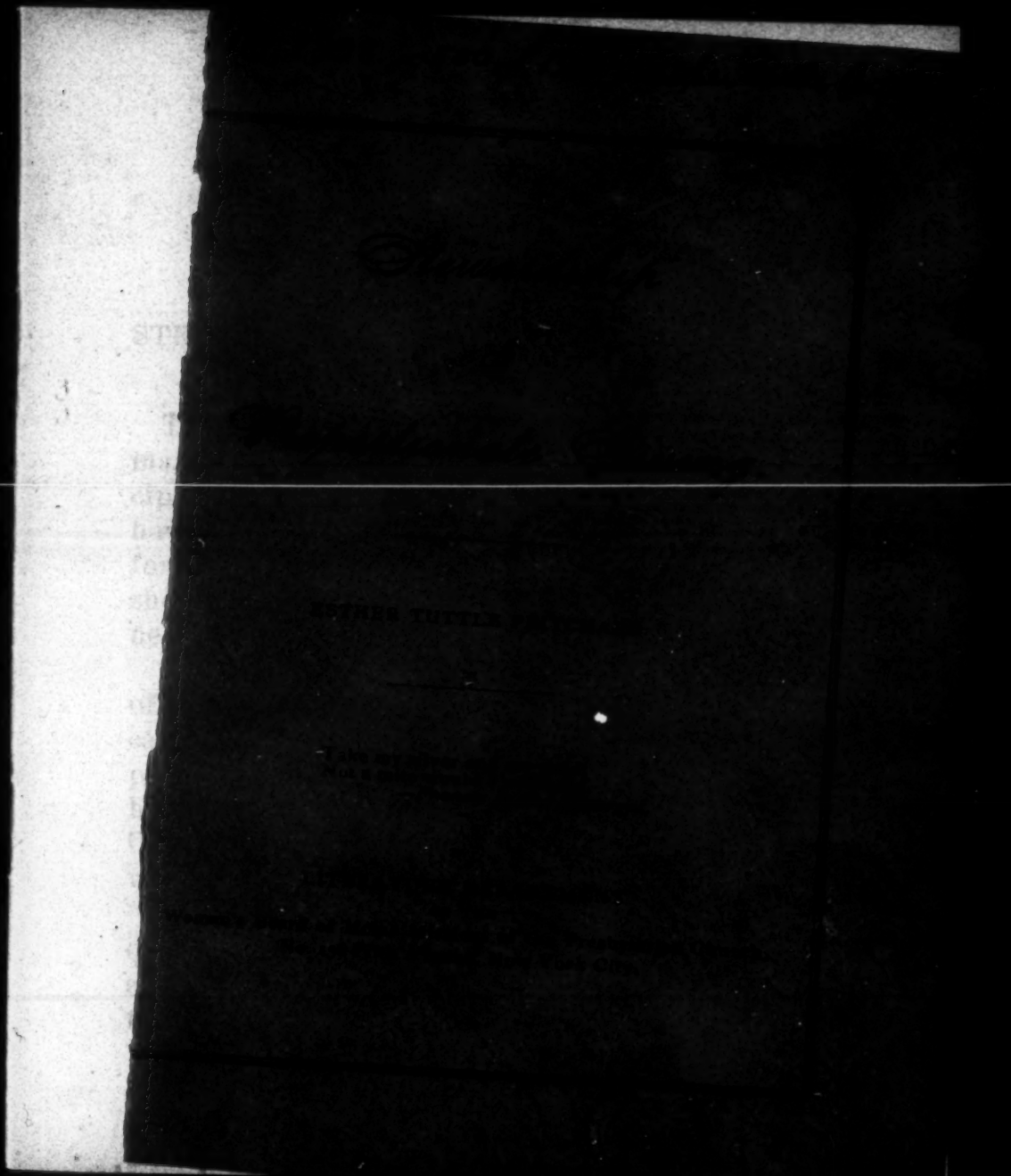

Stewardship

&

Proportionate Giving.

ESTHER TUTTLE PRITCHARD

Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.
—*Frances Ridley Havergal.*

FIFTH EDITION.

STEWARDSHIP AND SYSTEMATIC GIVING.

I.

There is, at the present time, a singularly marked recurrence, in some directions, to principles and practices of the early church that have long lain comparatively dormant, waiting for such a period of missionary activity as should revive their observance, by force of felt necessity.

So general is the awakening upon the subject of Systematic Giving, as scarcely to have escaped the casual observer. To use a common expression, "It is in the air." Believers are honestly asking, What are the principles of Christian Stewardship? and, What is the revealed plan for proportionate benevolence?

In the following paper, prepared at the request of a missionary society for a half-hour's address, the writer has attempted to consider these questions in a practical way, so far as her

limits would allow, without claiming to thoroughly cover the ground. It is sent forth, in this form, in the hope that it may stimulate further research and add its mite toward a more general recognition of the divine proprietorship of our means, and of the blessing that attends obedience to God's laws.

First, then,

THE BASIS OF OUR STEWARDSHIP

is to be found in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of which, we and all that we call ours, really belong to Him. The redemption of Israel in Egypt by blood, is given as the ground of Jehovah's right to the first-born of the family and the flock, Num. viii. 17; and the first-born, that God then hallowed unto Himself, stood as the representative of the whole family, whether of man or beast. In the same sense the first-fruits of the vineyard, the orchard, the wine-fat, the oil-press and the field, as well as the one-seventh of the time, were representative of the remainder, according to Rom. ix. 16, "For if the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy." The sancti-

fication of a part always implied the sanctification of the whole; and in this way Jehovah declared His divine right to the person, time and possessions of the Israelite. Assuming that God has always dealt with his people upon the same principles, however differently applied, it is a fair inference that the ownership thus asserted and symbolized of the redeemed under the Old Covenant is equally true of the redeemed under the New Covenant.

Not only was this divine ownership of the whole signified in the Hebrew Church by a special claim to the first-fruits, it was further emphasized in the varied exactions by which a revenue was supplied for the church and the poor. These were stipulated amounts to be paid into the divine treasury, for the use of property which only nominally belonged to the Israelite. First, there was the tithe or income tax; then the vow and free will offerings; and the annual feast collections, at which all the men were required to be present, and where no one was allowed to come before the Lord empty. The command was: "Every man shall

give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." Definite provision was also made for the poor in the privileges of the Sabbatic year; so that, all included, the annual tax of the Jew has been estimated to have averaged one-third—some say one-half—of his entire income.

One would certainly think, judging from all maxims of worldly prudence, that a tax of 30 or 50 per cent. on a man's income, even though divinely levied, would be *ruinous*; but the fact was, the payment of this tax was the Israelite's

GUARANTEE OF FINANCIAL SUCCESS,

and his immunity against loss. Let it be distinctly noted that to the law of Systematic Giving, under the Old Covenant, there were affixed expressly revealed *temporal* rewards for obedience and temporal penalties for disobedience. Two references must suffice to prove this point: First, "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. . . .

Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto;" Deut. iv. 7–10. Again, we have that familiar passage in Malachi iii. 10, 11, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer* for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts." Here we see that the objection commonly raised against the teaching of temporal rewards for Systematic Giving under the New

* May there not be a close connection between the "devourers"—such as flies, locusts, floods and untimely frosts—that destroy the fruits of our ground in this day, and the unfaithfulness of God's stewards in the Christian church?

Covenant, that we offer a mercenary motive for a religious duty, would have been just as applicable to the law for the Jew. Nor does the temporal consideration in either case appeal more strongly to our self-interest than the consideration of future rewards and punishments.

We come now to consider one very

SUPERIOR ADVANTAGE

which the tithe system possessed in principle over our modern method of giving. Take, for example, the first annual tithe, that was appropriated exclusively to the support of the priestly tribe. Not being imposed by human authority, it was considered as paid to God rather than to man. It was laid upon the Israelite as a *debt* due to Jehovah and was paid to Him, as divinely directed, through the treasury of the church. When it was withheld, Israel was charged, not with robbing the Levite, but with robbing God. "Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed *me*, even this whole nation." Hence it was not in the least optional with the supporting tribes, whether they should pay it; nor was it in the least optional

with the church officials as to how it should be applied. From this, it is plain, the Levite considered that God rewarded him, and he was thus saved from trimming his way to get a salary from man; while, on the other hand, the church, in paying its tithes to God, was kept from constantly estimating the ministerial value of the Levite, to know how much it ought to give him.

In addition to this first tithe for the priests, there were also a second and third tithe appropriated to the annual feasts for the benefit of the poor. I suppose these feasts were a kind of *church sociable*, with this difference from those of modern times, that the Hebrew gave his money to make a supper, in place of giving a supper to make his money.

We have now briefly outlined *God's* plan—not man's—as found in the polity of His ancient church, for supplying his own treasury. Is it not evident, that if His church of to-day had a corresponding scheme of proportionate giving, all her languishing enterprises would be quickened and liberally sustained? Mission-

aries would be sent to every part of the globe; the ministry at home would be every way more untrammeled; fairs, rafflings and feastings to get money for the work of the Lord would be banished; and the whole system of Christian beneficence would be elevated to an *act of worship*, that plane of sacred dignity to which it properly belongs.

II.

We turn now from considering the principles and practice of Stewardship under the Old Covenant, to inquire to what extent these have been modified for the Christian Covenant. Abel Stevens says: "Though this admirable beneficence was connected with the Jewish ecclesiastical system, and is, therefore, *annulled in detail;* yet, will any Christian man admit that its essential principles are annulled?" From this, I infer that he concedes benevolence upon a fixed plan is as divinely authorized for the Christian as it was for the Jew. This much ought to be readily admitted, but just what this fixed plan should be is the practical question. In the present discussion of this subject, it is surprising to find how many advocates there are for a return to the esential *Tithe System*,

without bondage to its details. First, "The example of the Christian church for the first one thousand years is in favor of this method, as is proved by the writings of Origen, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and others of the Fathers. At the close of that period, "the Pope usurped authority, alienated the revenues of the church and released whom he pleased from the payment of tithes."

Second, It is a generally recognized principle among Protestants, in deciding questions of this kind, that "any rule of duty that existed before the giving of the Levitical Code, and was confirmed by Moses, is still of force, unless it has been set aside by authority of God." Judged by this principle, the tithe system has as much support for its continuance as has the Sabbath. Both were institutions in existence from the earliest history, were incorporated into the Mosaic Law, and, so far as we know, have never been abolished by command of God. In a ceremonial and typical sense, the Sabbath has been fulfilled, but in its essential principles

it is forever based upon our physical and spiritual needs. It has been justly said that "those who claim exemption from the Sabbath on the ground that all time is sacred, soon lose sight of the sacredness of any time; and that, likewise, they who excuse themselves from tithes on the ground that all their property is the Lord's do not, in fact, give Him so much as a tenth."

Third, There is great force in the maxim of Hooker: "If the end for which a law provides, be perpetually necessary, and the way whereby it provides be perpetually, also, most apt, no doubt but every such law ought forever to remain unchangeable." We have seen that the primary end for which this law provided under the Old Covenant, was the support of those who gave their whole time to the service of the sanctuary. That that "end" is "perpetually necessary" is evident from 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? *Even so* hath the Lord ordained

that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." It only remains, then, to inquire if the Christian church has devised any way to provide for this end, which has proved itself more "apt." Let the hap-hazard, spasmodic, grudging manner in which men give, make reply. Let the crippled resources of the church and the vain appeals that come from neglected portions of the field, to which laborers cannot be sent for lack of money, make reply. For my own part, without attempting to dogmatize for others, I prefer to give the tithe system the benefit of the doubt.

Finally, there is positive New Testament authority for

A METHODICAL PLAN

of benevolence in this charge of Paul to the churches of Galatia and Corinth: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Here was a specified time for laying aside their money, and a definite basis for determining the

amount.* One thing is plain,—Paul did not instate the practice of preaching begging sermons, and had Systematic Giving been adhered to, they would never have been necessary. Those early Christians were not allowed to wait for a stirring appeal from the minister before taking up their collection,—the money was to be ready when Paul came.

"*Let every one of you* lay by him in store." From this it appears, all the money was not to be given by a few rich men; the "poor man" was to "give his copper, the middle man his silver and the rich man his gold." Have you ever thought what an impetus would be given to the work of the Lord if all the members of the church, everywhere, would each give *something?* I am surprised to find, from statistics, that the number who give *anything* is comparatively small.

"Let every one of you lay by him in store"—how much? "As God hath prospered him."

* These collections, so often referred to in the epistles, appear to have been for the relief of the poor rather than for the support of the Gospel.

This is precisely the same principle for voluntary offerings that we found in the Hebrew Church, where every man was to give as he was able, according as the Lord his God had blessed him. Mark that little word "*as*;" it is the unit of measure for our gifts. What is our record compared with this standard? Have we lived upon about the same amount each year, and given away more and more as we were increasingly prospered? or have we given about the same amount each year and spent more and more for ourselves as we were increasingly prospered?

George Müller insists upon literal compliance with the plan here given the early church and in accordance with this method, has donated out of funds given him for his private use $180,000. Only think of the privilege of turning that much money into "bags that wax not old!" There is no investment like it for dividends and eternal security. Will we not begin at once, if we have not already done so, to give this whole subject the attention which its sacred and practical importance demands; to

systematize what income we have, arrange a plan for proportionate giving, and then give *in faith*, assured of the returning "good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over?"

I close this consideration of the main question with an outline of the best arrangement I have yet seen for systematizing an income according to the principles we have been considering:—

INCOME.	TITHES.	FREE WILL OFFERINGS.

When a dividend is drawn, or money in any amount paid in, minute it in the income column, then deduct the tithes and make a note of it in the tithe column, and put the money into a separate purse, from which you are not to consider yourself any more at liberty to borrow than if it were the purse of your neighbor left in your care.

As you are "able," add to the tithes your free will offerings, recording the same in their appropriate column. By making use of this

plan you will readily see, at the end of the year, how much you have given, and how it corresponds with the degree of prosperity God has given you.

III.

The theory of Christian Stewardship and the rules for Systematic Giving are of easy application in the shop or the counting room of the man of business, and in the office or the study of the professional man; because in each case there is an income to systematize. But when we attempt to present this subject to women, we are embarrassed at the outset by the fact that in most homes there is but one purse, and over that the wife and daughter have no independent control. It may sound revolutionary, but the writer ventures to say a reform is really needed in this direction. No woman can afford to be denied such a personal relation to property as shall enable her, practically, to obey the commands and prove the promises of God.

The responsibilities of the wife, as a housekeeper, entitle her to be entrusted with a just allow-

ance to defray such expenses as come exclusively within her own province. Men of limited means may raise the objection that they cannot afford to make such an allowance; but the truth is, no man who has a judicious wife can afford not to do it. And if she is not judicious in the use of money, this is the speediest way to make her so. It is an economic measure which the result will justify wherever a wise and Christian system is observed. It is a degradation to a wife to be obliged to ask her husband for every dollar she expends and to give a detailed reason why she should have that amount. But, aside from such considerations, the influence upon children of a mother's example in the conscientious and systematic use of money, is an argument that ought to appeal strongly in its favor. Christian stewardship, as a part of the home training, is so

GENERALLY NEGLECTED

that the result is disastrous upon the moral and religious life of our young people. They grow up with almost no sense of the sacredness of

property; and, if children of wealthy parents, with about as little idea of even its temporal value. If money is given to a child, he is usually allowed either to spend it in selfish indulgence, or told to lay it up and see how much he will have when he comes to be a man. The one course tends to make him a spendthrift, the other, a miser. The pennies he throws into the missionary box generally come from the pocket of the father, and scarcely any more character is involved on the part of the child, in the act of giving, than if the father had given them himself.

Would it not be better to begin early to train children to such habits of religious economy and benevolence as they would certainly acquire by being given—or still better, taught to earn—a sum of their own, to be so invested as to yield a little income from which they could give a proportion as an offering to Christ? Aside from every other motive for this plan, I believe it would be the safest business training a boy or girl could have.

Then there is the young lady to be provided

for. A hundred and fifty dollars seems, to the father of medium fortune, a large sum to be given right out of pocket for the personal expenses of his daughter, and in place of it he will, very likely, give in small sums or in bills run up at the store, two hundred and fifty dollars, losing money himself and the daughter losing the education of turning her resources this way and that, adding here and taking off there, and making personal sacrifices that she may do good with her own means.

A friend of mine told me of a young lady of her acquaintance, who asked her father, one day, to give her such an annual allowance as we have been suggesting. At first he hesitated, then consented; and the result was, she saved that year on the outlay for her wardrobe one hundred dollars above the expenditure of the year previous, and dressed better besides.

IV.

A man there was, some call him mad,
The more he cast away the more he had.
Bunyan.

Solomon put into the form of a proverb a divine principle that runs in varied statement through the entire Bible, when he wrote: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty." A greater than Solomon, One who had authority to command and power to reward, said to his disciples, hundreds of years later: "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over shall men give into your bosom." But the faith of the church has not grasped the latter in the fulness of its practical meaning; and as to the

former it is such a paradox to human reason that scattering money should make men richer, and hoarding up money should make men poorer, that comparatively few are willing to test it in actual experience. Yet I venture to say, if we could summon, as witnesses, all the men and women who are conducting business upon the principles of Christian Stewardship, and who are in the habit of proportionate giving, there would be no exception to the testimony of spiritual blessing and temporal prosperity.* The written Word has put the latter in as direct relation to the former as an effect is to its cause. The promises are too numerous and too plainly stated for their meaning to be mistaken on this point. They were not given as an inducement to obedience, but as a support to our faith and as continual reminders that all real success comes from God.

A rich merchant, who was maintaining several missionaries in India, was asked how he could do it; he replied: "At my conversion I prom-

* By prosperity we do not, necessarily, mean *riches*, but the adequate supply of our temporal needs.

ised to give away a certain part of what my business brought in; and every year since, it has brought me in about double what it did the year before, and so I keep multiplying my gifts to Christ's cause." This testimony could be duplicated in scores of instances.

From a tract on Christian giving, I make this quotation: "During the last six years, circulars have been sent to at least three-fourths of all the evangelical ministers of the United States, in all of which were the following statement and question: 'My belief is that God blesses in temporal as well as in spiritual things the man who honors him by setting apart a stated portion of his income to His service. *I* have never known an exception;—have you?'... Many hundreds, perhaps thousands, have replied, and not a single authentic exception has ever been given."

The writer is personally acquainted with a young man of rare business qualities and equally rare devotion to Christ, who one day found his mind seized and held by Jacob's vow: "This stone which I have set for a pillar

shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." He decided to begin at once to give the tenth of his income to the Lord, and God sanctioned the covenant by multiplying his resources. The first year his tithes were $500. Not only did he give to the Lord his tithes, but he committed his entire business life to Him, and sought the counsel of the divine Proprietor in every step. At one time he wrote of having been in St. Louis to make a contract for the firm, saying: "In February I asked for the very largest thing there,—and it was large.—I trusted and have ever since, J—— helping me, and yesterday or day before it came. Just like Him! Now I can trust Him for anything. Glory to His name!" Here we see that he who, in his stewardship, was faithful over the little, is now becoming ruler over *much*.

I know of another gentleman who had been singularly unfortunate in losing his business positions until, finally, he was employed upon a salary, and gave into the hands of his wife the management of the family expenses. She began the practice of systematic giving. The

tithe was faithfully laid by, and such free will offerings were added as she could by economy save from the remainder. Immediately the tide of fortune turned and her husband, in place of losing his positions, began to be promoted and has gone steadily forward ever since. Now and then the wife goes to him and says: "N——, you may expect another promotion; I am going to give again." It is easy to smile at such faith and call it visionary, but I leave it with the reader to explain, upon any other ground than that of the divine blessing, the philosophy of the facts.

Not long since, an address was read on Systematic Giving in one of our large cities, and the laying aside of one-tenth of the net income for the Lord, was strongly advocated. A Christian lad was present whose father keeps a dairy, and the lad drives the milk wagon. A week or so after, his mother wanted some money to use for a religious purpose, and the son suggested she take the tithe money. It was found out that from the evening the boy heard the discourse he had been putting it into prac-

tice, and the receipts from the wagon had been strikingly large.

A devoted mother, who is one of Ohio's ablest Christian workers, wrote her son, who is in business in a distant city, suggesting that he systematize his income and give the tenth to Christ. He sent back word: "On Saturday I decided to give the tithe, and on Monday my salary came in with one-tenth added."

A young lady, not at the time an earnest Christian, was one day reading her Bible when she was struck with the positive promise: "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, he shall receive the same again of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Eph. iv., 8. The words impressed her with all the certainty of the most reliable human assurance. She felt it was safe to act upon that, and under its inspiration she began, as never before, practically to remember the poor. Years went on, and with a fuller consecration to Christ came clearer light upon this whole subject of Christian Stewardship. She saw that justice must never be sacrificed to mercy, that principle—not im-

pulse—together with the perceptible guidance of the Spirit, must determine the *to whom?* the *when?* and the *how much?* also, that the entire ground must be cleared of every element of enthusiasm, before the promises could be appropriated in faith, and verified. She became a wife, and at length had an income of her own for independent use; in its stewardship she strove to conform as best she knew to all the divine precepts that touch this many-sided question: to obey the Master in the purchase of her clothing, in the matter of personal gifts, in owing no man anything, in liberal payment of the seamstress, and in remembering first the poor of her own kindred. All this was seen to be the basis for that broader charity that goes out to the church and the world. Time passed, and her little income steadily increased until the fortune of the wife nearly equalled all her husband had acquired during years of toil in his profession. Do you ask how it came about? I can only reply, in many ways and by many hands, but in continual proof that this entire subject of Christian Stewardship is a divine

science, which, if rightly apprehended and practiced, would give to a godless world the strongest evidence of the truth of our Bible and of the reality of a living Christ.

A dear Christian lady of the Presbyterian church once told me that, when a child, she heard her minister explain the rule of tithing. She pondered it quietly by herself and made up her mind to lay by a penny for every dime she got, and a dime for every dollar. In this way her stewardship began and has been continued through a long life of devotion to the Master's work. Not long since she made an estimate of the amount she had given, and she assured me had she been told she would ever have had that much to give, she would not have believed it possible.

But the most perfect example of faithfulness in giving according as he was prospered, I have yet found is that of John Wesley, of whom his biographer says: "He began this good work early in life. When he had thirty pounds a year, he lived on twenty-eight and gave away forty shillings; the next year receiving sixty

pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two and thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds. Still, he lived on twenty-eight and gave away ninety-two. In this ratio he proceeded during the rest of his life, and in the course of fifty years it is estimated he gave away between twenty and thirty thousand pounds." The annual increase of his income further demonstrates the truth that, "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

HARD TIMES.

ESTHER TUTTLE PRITCHARD.

George Müller expresses the conviction that the hard times, the financial crises, the panics that every now and then cripple the business interests of the country, are directly traceable to the unfaithfulness of Christian stewards. We will not attempt to dogmatize as to what extent this is true, but one thing is certain, there is an intimate and necessary connection between the temporal prosperity of God's children and their obedience to divine principles in the acquisition and use of property. We say "God's children," for we must discriminate between them and the children of this world. The latter conduct business upon a selfish basis, and amass large fortunes without apparently incurring the present judgments of God; but the believer is amenable to the laws of Christ's kingdom in every department of his life, and may not violate them with impunity.

"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty"—literal purse poverty. Israel withheld the tithes from God's treasury, and a curse fell upon the whole nation. The devourer destroyed their crops, and the vine cast its fruit before the time in their fields. Again, they "sowed much and brought in little"; they "earned wages and put it into a bag with holes." The Jew seemed to have lost, for the time, his characteristic thrift and prudence.

"Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house.

"Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

"And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands." That was what would be called in our day "a bad year for farmers." But there had been a moral cause for their losses, and a moral reform was the only way back to prosperity. Immediately, while everything was depressed, they took up the interests of God's house, and from the very day that its foundation was laid, the blessing of the Lord returned upon them. (See Haggai.)

"Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be

filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine." Honoring the Lord with the substance embraces more than religious offerings and systematic giving. Again and again when we have quoted, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom," we have been met with the objection, from professed believers, that this could not be true in a temporal sense, for they had known such "good people who were always giving and who were always poor." This discrepancy must be accounted for in the lives of the examples cited, and not in the text. "Let God be true and every man a liar." We must find out the precise conditions upon which the divine blessing is promised, then examine the case to see if they have been complied with.

1. A man's vocation must be chosen with reference to the will of God and as a means of glorifying Him. Liberal giving will not hallow an unrighteous business.

2. "Owe no man anything." This allows no latitude for doubtful speculation; but may permit hiring the use of money under certain circumstances when the security is ample.

3. Every business transaction must be consistent with the command, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them." This precludes extortion and oppressing the hireling in his wages.

4. "Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts."

5. "Hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Let charity, or rather *justice*, begin at home.

6. Regulate the expenditures of dress and living in accordance with gospel simplicity.

7. Let there be proportionate and systematic giving.

When these principles are adhered to, the believer has a right to expect God's blessing upon his business, and that the Lord will supply all his temporal need. We are not afraid to challenge any one to give us a single instance of such a man who is "always giving and always poor." Read II Cor. ix, and note the context of this verse: "And God is able to make all grace* abound towards you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work."

*Liberality.—Clark's Commentary.